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PP RUEHLN RUEHVK RUEHYG
DE RUEHDBU #0359 0551100
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 241100Z FEB 06
FM AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6777
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 1396
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1437
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN PRIORITY 1426
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 1377
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 1323
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 1393
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 1351
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 1290
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 1196
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY 0770
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 1444
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 1479
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0977
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 7892

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STATE FOR SCA/CEN, SCA/PAB, SCA/INS, SCA/PPD

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SUBJECT: IN TAJIKISTAN, THIS WEEK'S MEDIA BOUT GOES TO IRAN

¶1. Groundbreaking for the Iran-funded Sangtuda-2 hydropower station dominated weekly press coverage, from Tajik and Russian Internet agencies to radio, television, and print media news outlets. This followed heavy government and independent media attention on last week's announcement of the imminent completion of the Iran-funded Anzob tunnel linking southern Tajikistan with its northern territory.

¶2. In recent weeks, the government-owned media, including Tajik television stations, has given Iran the heavy coverage and positive press it usually gives to Russia. Concerning Sangtuda-2, President Rahmonov stated, "This is not Iran's last contribution . . . Tajikistan and Iran have resumed cooperation after a hiatus of many years. Iran was among the first countries to recognize the independence of Tajikistan." Rahmonov lauded the "billion kilowatt hours a year" that Sangtuda-2 should produce and the great help that Iran is to the people of Tajikistan.

¶3. In addition to these two Iranian building projects, the Tajik media recently began to highlight Iranian Ambassador to Tajikistan Nosir Sarmadi Porso's political statements about Iran's right to possess nuclear energy and a host of issues not specifically concerning Tajik-Iranian bilateral interests. Tajik and Iranian political leaders alike never fail to mention the close historical and linguistic similarities between the two nations.

¶4. COMMENT: Local Embassy staff were the first to pick up on the shift in media attention on Iran, noting the daily television coverage, front-page newspaper articles, and the elevation of Tajik-Iranian relations, from construction to high-level visits. In addition to the rhetoric of culture closeness, Iran is letting its investments speak for its relations with Tajikistan - Sangtuda-2 and the Anzob Tunnel will cost hundreds of millions to complete over the next few years - and the Tajik media, directed and independent are paying

attention. END COMMENT.

WILSON